

“THE PRIMARY NEEDS OF THE NEGRO RACE.”

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# AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE HAMPTON NORMAL  
AND AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE,

BY

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*Of Howard University.*

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"Let knowledge grow from more to more."—TENNYSON.

"Labor conquers all things."—VIRGIL.

"Virtue alone outbuilds the pyramids;  
Her monuments shall last when Egypt's fall."—YOUNG.

"You who celebrate by-gones,  
Who have explored the outward, the surfaces of races,  
the life that has exhibited itself,  
Who have treated of man as the creature of politics,  
aggregates, rulers, and priests,  
I, habitan of the Alleghanies, treating of him as he is  
in himself, in his own rights,  
Pressing the pulse of the life that has seldom exhibited itself,  
(the great pride of man in himself,)  
Chanter of Personality, outlining what is yet to be,  
I project the history of the future."—WALT WHITMAN.

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NOTE.—The author takes this opportunity to express his gratitude to Rev. David H. Greer, D. D., rector of St. Bartholomew's Church, New York, who was present at the delivery of the following address, and through whose kindly interest it is now given to the public in its present form.

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According to a strict construction of terms, the primary needs of life are those which are necessary to the continuance of the species. Food and drink, covering and shelter are indispensable to animal existence. Life is a continual warfare against internal and external foes which, if unchecked, would speedily lead to death. Man has the same physical necessities as the rest of the animal creation, to which he is indissolubly linked, and of which he is a special emergence. He therefore comes into possession of these necessities as a part of his animal inheritance.

I wish, however, on this occasion, to discuss that phase of life which is more than meat, and to consider those needs that appertain to the nobler side of our nature—those which qualify man to live in an enlightened state—and more especially, the requisites of a new people who are just entering into civilization.

THE HIGHER SUSCEPTIBILITIES OF THE NEGRO.

The Negro is scarcely ever considered with reference to the primary problems of life. Those needs of the human race which do not depend upon temporary conditions and circumstances, are not generally deemed predicable of him. The African is not regarded in his own rights, and for his own sake, but merely with reference to the effect which his presence and activity produce upon the dominant Aryan. He is merely a coefficient which is not detachable from the quantity whose value it may either increase or diminish. The black object is always projected against a white background, producing a grotesque and gloomy silhouette. The whole history of the contact of the races deals with the Negro as a satellite whose movements are secondary to those of the central orb about which it revolves. Civilization was not thought possible for the sons of Ethiopia. The sable livery of the tropics was deemed impervious to ennobling influences. The Negro could only contribute to the wants and welfare of the higher, or, I had rather say, the haughtier race. With a self-debasement surpassing the vow of the anchorite, he was expected to bow down to this white god and serve him, ascribing unto him "the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever." The whole scheme of the subjugation and oppression of the African by the Aryan is based upon the theory that the Negro represents an

inferior order of creation, and therefore his needs are secondary to and derivable from those of his white lord and master. The ordinary attributes and susceptibilities of the human race were denied him. When it was first proposed to furnish means for the development of the nobler side of the Negro race, those who possessed the wisdom of their day and generation entertained the proposition either with a sneer or with a smile. Ridicule and contempt have characterized the habitual attitude of the American mind toward the Negro's higher strivings. The African was brought to this country for the purpose of performing manual and menial labor. His bodily powers alone were required to accomplish this industrial mission. No more account was taken of his higher susceptibilities than of the mental and moral faculties of the lower animals. The white man, as has been wittily said, saw in the Negro's mind only what was apparent in his face—"darkness there, and nothing more." His usefulness in the world is still measured by physical faculties rather than by qualities of mind and soul. Even after the wonderful transformations of the past thirty years, many claim to discern no function which he can fill in society except to administer to the wants and wishes of others by means of bodily toil. The merciless proposition of Carlyle—"the Negro is useful to God's creation only as a servant"—still finds wide acceptance. It is so natural to base a theory upon a long-established practice that one no longer wonders at the prevalence of this belief. The Negro has sustained servile relations to the Caucasian for so long a time, that it is easy, as it is agreeable to Aryan pride, to conclude that servitude is his ordained place in society.

As the higher susceptibilities of the Negro were not needed their existence was, at one time, denied. The eternal inferiority of the race was assumed as a part of the cosmic order of things. History, literature, science, speculative conjectures, and even the holy scriptures were ransacked for evidence and argument in support of this theory. It was not deemed inconsistent with divine justice and mercy that the curse of servitude to everlasting generations should be pronounced upon a race because their assumed progenitor utilized as an object lesson in temperance the indulgent proclivity of an ancient patriarch. Science was placed under tribute for support of the ruling dogma. The Negro's inferiority was clearly deducible from physical peculiarities. In basing the existence of mental, moral, and spiritual qualities upon the shape and size of the skull, facial outline, and cephalic configuration, the anti-Negro scientists

outdistanced the modern psychologists in assuming a mechanical equivalent of thought.

But in spite of scientific demonstration, learned disquisitions, prohibitive legislation, and divine intendment, the Negro's nobler nature persisted in manifesting itself. The love, sympathy, tender fidelity, and vicarious devotion of the African slave, the high spiritual and emotional fervor manifested in the weird wailings and lamentations of the plantation melodies, the literary taste of Phyllis Wheatley, the scientific acumen of Benjamin Banneker, the persuasive eloquence of Frederick Douglass, were but faint indications of smothered mental, moral, and spiritual power. The world has now come to recognize that the Negro possesses the same faculties, powers, and susceptibilities as the rest of mankind, albeit they have been stunted and dwarfed by centuries of suppression and ill usage. The Negro, too, is gradually awakening to a consciousness of this great truth. The common convergence of religious and secular thought is toward the universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. This universality of kinship implies commonality of powers, possibilities, and destiny. It is difficult to estimate the importance of this belief to the backward races of the earth. We have of late heard a strangely discordant jangle from the jungles of India, with contemptuous reference to "lesser breeds without the law." Rudyard Kipling regards all other races of the earth only as contributory factors to the glory of his own. This conviction is betrayed even in what he intends for a kindly reference :

"But the things you will learn from the Yellow an' Brown,  
They'll 'elp you an' 'eap with the White."

The backward races, according to this new light of Asia, have no inherent capacities, rights, or prospects, but are merely a part of the "White Man's Burden," a load more grievously to be borne than the weight which mythology assigned to the back of the ill-fated Atlas. But this note is strangely discordant to the prevailing sentiment of the closing century. How much broader in comprehension, truer in prophecy, and noble in sympathy and spirit are the lines of Walt Whitman :

"A man's body at auction !

(For before the war I go to the slave mart and watch the sale.)

I help the auctioneer, the sloven does not half know his business.

Gentlemen, look at this wonder !

Whatever the bids of the bidders, they cannot bid high enough for it.

For it the globe lay preparing quintillions of years without one animal or plant.

For it the revolving cycles truly and steadily rolled.  
In this head the all-baffling brain.

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*

Examine these limbs, red, black, or white, they are cunning in tendon and  
nerve,

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*

Exquisite senses, life-lit eyes, pluck, volition,

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*

And wonders within there yet.

Within there runs blood,

The same old blood! the same red running blood!

There swells and jets a heart, there all passions, desires, reachings, aspirations.

(Do you think they are not there because they are not expressed in parlors and  
lecture rooms?)

This is not only one man, this is the father of those who shall be fathers in their  
turns.

In him the start of populous states and rich republics,

Of him countless immortal lives, with countless embodiments and enjoyments."

It is a matter of prime importance for the Negro to feel and to convince his fellow men that he possesses the inherent qualities and, therefore, the inherent rights that belong to the human race.

Carlyle, though blinded by narrow prejudice, when handling the Negro in the concrete, is nevertheless a true philosopher when dealing with general principles. The same author who regards the Negro as an "amiable blockhead," and amenable only to the white man's "beneficent whip," also exclaims: "that one man should die ignorant who had capacity for knowledge. this I call a tragedy, were it to happen more than twenty times in the minute." When it is granted that the Negro has capacity for knowledge and virtue, all of his other problems flow as corollaries from the leading proposition. The basal needs of the human race are identical. The fundamental, natural, social, and spiritual laws apply alike to all. And yet special conditions require special lines of treatment.

#### THE NEGRO MISSES THE GRADUAL PROCESS OF EVOLUTION.

Civilization may be defined as the sum total of those influences and agencies that make for knowledge and virtue. This is the goal, the *ultima Thule*, of all human strivings. The essential factors of civilization are knowledge, industry, culture, and virtue. Knowledge comprehends the facts and truths of the universe; industry embodies them in concrete form; culture leads to rational enjoyment; virtue preserves and makes eternal. The African was snatched from the wilds of savagery and thrust into the midst of a mighty civilization.



He thus escaped the gradual process of evolution. Other men have labored and he must enter into their labors. Education must accomplish more for a backward people than it does for those who are in the forefront of progress. It must not only lead to the unfoldment of faculties, but must fit for a life from which the recipient is separated by many centuries of development. The fact that a backward people are surrounded by a civilization which is so far in advance of their own is by no means an unmixed advantage. In the tempestuous current of modern life the contestant must either swim on the surface or sink out of sight. He must either conform or succumb to the inexorable law of progress. The African chieftain who would make a pilgrimage from his native principality to the city of Washington, might accomplish the first part of his journey by the original modes of transportation—in the primitive dugout and upon the backs of his slaves—but he would complete it upon the steamship, the railway, the electric car, and the automobile. How swift the transformation! and yet how suggestive of centuries of toil, struggle, and mental endeavor! It required the human race thousands of years to bridge the chasm between savagery and civilization, but now it must be crossed by a school curriculum of a few years duration. The analytic process is always more rapid than the synthetic. The embryologists tell us that the individual, in developing from conception to maturity, must pass in rapid succession through all the stages traversed by the race in its struggle upward. We are also informed that social evolution must take a somewhat similar course. The European child is supposed to absorb the civilization of his race in about twenty-five years of formative training. The Negro is required to master, *de novo*, the principles of civilization in a similar, and, indeed, in a shorter time. If many friends of the race have been disappointed at the results, it is because they started with a false philosophy. Education may assist, but it cannot supplant evolution. It becomes necessary for the Negro to understand the meaning and the purpose of the training he is receiving from the schools, and to appreciate the great responsibility which it imposes.

Education is conservative rather than progressive in its main feature. Its chief function is to enable the individual to live the life already attained by the race. The initiative of progress is reserved for the few choice spirits of the human race. The bulk of any people can only live up to the level of their social medium, and can be uplifted only by social impulses imparted by some powerful personality. It is a wise provision of nature that large bodies move slowly,

otherwise they would acquire dangerous momentum. The progress of the race must be provokingly slow as compared with that of the individual. Education prepares for a statical rather than a dynamic condition of society. And yet, notwithstanding these stern truths, every educated Negro *must* be a reformer, a positive, progressive influence in uplifting the masses, and that, too, in spite of the fact that he belongs to a backward breed that has never taken the initiative in the progressive movements of the world. He must, therefore, be aroused to a consciousness of personal power, the energy of the will, the individual initiative, that subtle, indefinable quality which has always exerted a controlling influence upon human affairs, in spite of the theories of doctrinaires and the formulas of philosophy.

The education of a people should be conditioned upon their capacity, social environment, and the probable life which they are to lead in the immediate future. We do not introduce the differential calculus in the kindergarten, nor can the inhabitants of the deep be taught to live in the upper regions of the air. That system of education, by whatever name it may pass, is seriously faulty unless it touches the vital needs of the people for whom it is intended. The groundwork of knowledge is fixed and invariable; but in its applications to the problems of life, it is adaptable to existing needs, conditions, and circumstances. The transitional period of a people necessarily produces a class of social and intellectual amphibians, whose life must be adaptable to the rarer as well as the denser medium. However far the individual may rise above the common level, he will find that the Newtonian formula also applies to social gravitation—"the force of attraction varies directly as the mass."

#### INTELLECTUAL CULTURE NECESSARY TO INGRAFT THE RACE UPON MODERN CIVILIZATION.

The first great need of the Negro is that the choice youth of the race should assimilate the principles of culture and hand them down to the masses below. This is the only gateway through which a new people may enter into modern civilization. Herein lies the history of culture. The select minds of the backward race or nation must first receive the new cult and adapt it to the peculiar needs of their own people. Did not the wise men of Greece receive the light from Egypt? The Roman youth of ambition completed their education in Athens; the noblemen of northern Europe sent their sons to the southern peninsulas in quest of larger learning; and up to the present day, American youth repair to the European universi-



ties for a fuller knowledge of the culture of the old world. Japan looms up as the most progressive of the non-Aryan races. This wonderful progress is due, in a large measure, to their wise plan of procedure. They send their picked youth to the great centers of western knowledge ; but before this culture is applied to their own needs it is first sifted through the seive of their native comprehension. The graduates of Hampton and other institutions of like aim are forming centers of civilizing influence in all parts of the land, and we confidently believe that these grains of leaven will ultimately leaven the whole lump.

That mere contact with a race of superior development cannot of itself unfold the best possibilities of a backward people is a proposition, which, I think, no student of social phenomena will be inclined to dispute. For four hundred years the European has been brought in contact with feebler races in all parts of the world, and, in most cases, this contact has been as the blighting finger of death. Nowhere do we find a single instance in which a people has been lifted into civilization thereby. Outward conformity may be enforced by a rigid discipline ; but outward forms and fair practices are of little or no avail if the inward appreciation be wanting. Civilization is a centrifugal and not a centripetal process. It cannot be injected hy-podermically. Healthy growth cannot be secured by feeding a child when he is not hungry, or by forcing upon him a diet which he can neither digest nor assimilate. This truth applies not only to the two backward races in our own country, but also to our "new caught sullen peoples," in the distant oriental seas.

Aside from political ambition and commercial exploitation, the chief motive of the European in treating with feebler races has been to civilize and enlighten them. The conversion of the Indian to the Christian faith was the chief motive assigned for the early colonization of America, and yet the influence of such schools as Hampton and Carlisle has, perhaps, done more to uplift the red man than all of the contact with the white race since Columbus first planted his Catholic cross in the virgin soil of a new world. Indeed, the superficial, the frivolous, and the vicious qualities are most easily communicable. The substantial qualities of mind and soul can only be developed by independent activity.

For four centuries the Portuguese have been touching the life of the east coast of Africa with their missionary propagandism, commercial enterprise, and governmental policy ; but, according to the highest testimony, they have made no more abiding impression up-

on the life of that continent than one might make upon the surface of the ocean with the dent of his finger.

The Negro has now reached a critical stage in his career. The point of attachment between the races which slavery made possible has been destroyed. The relation is daily becoming less intimate and friendly, and more business-like and formal. It thus becomes all the more imperative that the race should gain for itself the primary principles of knowledge and culture.

#### INDUSTRIAL KNOWLEDGE THE BASIS OF ALL PROGRESS.

The next great need of the race lies in the realm of concrete things. When the Creator had breathed into human nostrils the breath of life He gave man the injunction to subdue the earth. A mastery over the material world is a fulfillment of the first divine mandate. Indeed the higher phases of life must ever rest upon a material foundation. While we may never hope to find a mechanical equivalent of spirit, yet we know that natural laws react upon the spiritual world. Of two laborers, one is able to earn a dollar and the other a dollar and a half per day. The difference is an insignificant piece of metal or scrap of paper, which the philosopher might deem wholly contemptible. But by reason of this difference, the more skilled workman is enabled to give his children a better preparation for the great rivalry of life, where the most fortunate rather than the most fit survive. His descendants, therefore, are more likely to strive for mental and moral excellence, and to exercise a wholesome influence upon the world for all time to come. The nursery lines convey an important lesson, especially if they be carried to their logical conclusion :

“For want of the nail, the shoe was lost ;  
 For want of the shoe, the horse was lost ;  
 For want of the horse, the man was lost ;  
 For want of the man, the battle was lost.”  
 For want of the battle, a *civilization* was lost.

Who can forecast the effect of material things upon the higher life of a people ?

To all outward appearances, our civilization is intensely materialistic in its tendency ; the dollar is its highest common divisor. The value of a picture, a poem, or a sermon, and all the products of hand, mind, and soul, are measured in terms of this standard. I remember reading a most interesting discourse by an able divine on the subject “How Christ Saves Men” ; and in order to show a sin-

ful world that "godliness is profitable in all things," the prudent Scotch preacher took the precaution to have this information copyrighted! The business-like methods of the modern world would even place a patent upon the road to salvation. If the "Sermon on the Mount" were now delivered for the first time, some enterprising business house would no doubt offer the author flattering inducement for the exclusive right of publication. We reprobate this material spirit only when it begins and ends in itself, leading to no higher aim. But material things must ever lie at the basis of a nobler life.

Your appearance here today illustrates this principle. There are many words in the English language which can be better illustrated than defined. Hampton Institute is perhaps the most striking definition of philanthropy that can be found upon the face of the earth. And yet it is built upon a material foundation. Unless the good people had first developed the material resources about them, this Institution could not have been founded and could not continue for a single hour. The greatest service which this school can render the Negro race is to enable its pupils to get hold of the primary factors of the industrial world, and to do for others what it has done for them.

The Indians might have occupied this country for a thousand years, but they never would have built a Hampton Institute—not because they might not have had the philanthropic disposition, but because the resources would have been wanting. The white man expelled the Indian, took his possessions, developed the unexplored resources, and now he devotes a portion of his accumulations to establish institutions where the red man may learn the secret and method of his power. All of the humiliation, sorrow, and suffering of the two races represented in this association will not have been in vain if through these agencies they are enabled to get hold of the primary factors of civilization.

Why do the people of the Occident outstrip the nations of the East in the race of life? It is not because they possess greater mental and moral susceptibilities, nor yet because they have maintained a higher degree of spiritual culture—far otherwise. But rather because they have taken the advice given to man at the creation. They have subdued wind and wave, light and lightning, heat and cold, and the mechanical powers and forces, and made them obedient to their imperious will. Upon this foundation they will yet build a superstructure of superior moral and spiritual excellence. This is ra-

tional development. I have always had a profound admiration for the builders of the Tower of Babel, for in their aspiration to reach the heavens they at least begun with a solid foundation. While the Aryan races have been subduing the earth, the orientals, in their ascetic lassitude, have allowed themselves to be subdued by the vicissitudes of nature, while dreaming of the beatific splendors of the world to come. And, as a result, the masses still remain in poverty, ignorance, and moral degradation. The pyramid of virtue will not stand upon the apex of poverty.

The Negro especially needs to become rooted and grounded in the scientific principles of concrete things. A tropical climate is not conducive to the development of practical energy. Slavery taught the Negro how to work by rule and rote, but not according to principle and method. All progress consists in applying the thought within to the thing without. The day when the world paid its homage to storehouses of abstract impracticable knowledge has long since passed away. The demand of the age is, "What can you do, and how well can you do it?"

We sometimes see the higher education contrasted with industrial training as to their effect upon the development of the Negro race. There can be no conflict of interest. The controversy is both silly and mischievous.

"All are but parts of one stupendous whole."

Ten million people have all the needs of the human race. We may emphasize this or that phase of their wants according to temporary conditions or the pressure of circumstances. A full development must possess length, breadth and depth. If intellectual culture constitutes the higher, industrial training constitutes the broader need. Science and skill are required in all lines of work, from the lowest menial service to the highest application in the arts. A practical knowledge of things enables the recipient to do with skill, precision, and method whatever task may devolve upon him. The slovenly, shiftless, wasteful, unthinking methods of former times will no more be tolerated in the humbler callings than in the higher walks of life. We must remember, too, that mental development can be gotten from the commonplace things of life as well as from those beyond the range of immediate utility. A scientific study of the living roots of growing plants will afford as much discipline, if not the same culture, as an equal amount of time spent upon the dry roots of a dead language. But let us not forget that thought is the

leading ingredient in all education. Manipulatory cleverness must be under direction of a guiding intelligence ; the seat of skill is in the brain, not in the fingers. Goldsmith tells us that—

“Just experience tells in every soil  
That those who think must govern those that toil.”

But in a land where all govern themselves, those who toil must also think. The mechanics of the South produced by the regime of slavery, are falling out of the industrial equation because they did not possess sufficient intelligence to maintain themselves against modern rivalry.

The locomotive throws forward the rays of its headlight dispelling the encircling darkness, in order that its mighty engine may make way safely through the dangers of the night. The Negro needs *head-light* to direct his energies and make his way through the difficulties and intricacies of the industrial world.

#### SELF-RELIANT ACTIVITY.

Another great need of the race, which the schools must in a large measure supply, is self-reliant manhood. Slavery made the Negro as dependent upon the intelligence and foresight of his master as a soldier upon the will of his commander. He had no need to take thought as to what he should eat or drink or wherewithal he should be clothed.

Knowledge necessarily awakens self consciousness of power. When a child learns the multiplication table he gets a clear notion of intellectual dignity. Here he gains an acquisition which is his permanent, personal possession, and which can never be taken from him. It does not depend upon external authority ; he could reproduce it if all the visible forms of the universe were effaced. They say that the possession of personal property is the greatest stimulus to self-respect. When one can read his title clear to earthly possessions, it awakens a consciousness of the dignity of his own manhood. And so when one has digested and assimilated the principles of knowledge he can file his declaration of intellectual independence. He can adopt the language of Montaigne—“Truth and reason are common to everyone, and are no more his who spake them first than his who speaks them after ; 'tis no more according to Plato than according to me, since he and I equally see and understand them.”

Primary principles have no ethnic quality. We hear much in this day and time of the white man's civilization, but it is no more his



than it is yours. We had just as well speak of the white man's multiplication table. Civilization is the common possession of all who will assimilate and apply its principles. England can utilize no secret process of art or invention that is not equally available to Japan. We reward ingenuity with a patent right for a period of years upon the process that has been invented ; but when an idea has been published to the world it is no more the exclusive property of the author than gold, after it has been put in circulation, can be claimed by the miner who first dug it from its hiding place in the earth. No race or nation can preempt civilization any more than they can monopolize the atmosphere which surrounds the earth, or the waters which hold it in their liquid embrace.

In passing through the streets the other day I saw a young man accommodate his companion with a light from his cigar. After the spark had once been communicated the beneficiary stood upon an equal footing with the benefactor. In both cases the fire must be continued by drawing fresh supplies of oxygen from the atmosphere. From whatever source a nation may derive the light of civilization, it must be perpetuated by the exercise of their own faculties. All of the visible forms of civilization have been dug out of the ground. We boast of our towns and cities, of our steamships and railways, and of the mighty works of art and invention, but the voice of time is ever whispering—"dust thou art, to dust returneth." But after all these shall have crumbled into dust, the ingenuity of man will be able to produce mightier works than those that perished. Mind and matter are the irreducible elements. Mind is the common heritage of man, and matter is indestructible.

The Negro race has not yet directed its energies to the solution of primary problems. It has been content to receive the crumbs that fall from the white man's table. We are often deceived by the splendid achievements which the Negro has made since emancipation. A careful analysis will show that the success achieved so far has come mainly from secondary rather than primary conditions. Talent has been entering the field that offered the greatest inducement and the quickest returns. Law, theology, medicine, teaching, the ministry, and politics have absorbed the best energies of the race. The success achieved has been splendid and commendable. But it does not require a prophet to predict that success in these directions has almost, or quite, reached its maximum. By testing the strength of material, the builder can tell with certainty the weight of superstructure which a given foundation will sup-

port. The distinguished men of the race so far have risen upon the dead necessities of the masses. The sick must be healed, the ignorant must be enlightened, the vicious must be restrained, the poor must have the gospel preached unto them. While these pursuits are necessary, they do not touch the bed-rock of our economic structure. Those who reach distinction on such conditions stand as marble statues upon pedestals of clay. The primary sources of wealth are agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and commerce. These are the lines along which the intelligent energy of the race must be directed in the future. They must take the industrial initiative. The earth will yield up her increase as willingly to the skillful persuasion of a swarthy as of a fair husbandman; the markets of the world know no article by its color; steam and electricity, wind and wave, heat and cold, are blind forces and therefore can see no race distinctions.

Last spring I received from my florist a fine rose bush that had been grafted upon a Manetti stem, with instructions that the Manetti must be buried out of sight and that its shoots be pinched back as fast as they appeared above ground. The strength which its hardy roots derived from the soil was to be diverted from the natural course of developing the plant itself and infused into the more lordly rose, thus insuring greater vigor of growth and brilliance of bloom. I was forcibly reminded of the analogous situation of the Negro in the industrial world. While the race has, in a sense, been dealing with industrial first principles, it has, nevertheless, served only a vicarious purpose. The Negro has been suppressed below the social surface, and wherever an individual emergence appeared it was forthwith pressed back to the common level. The substance which his sinews derived from the soil went to enrich, adorn, and glorify another race. But now, under the guidance of intelligence, the substance of his toil must be utilized to promote his own growth and expansion. "Each plant must grow from its own roots," is the botanical equivalent of the old mechanical adage—"Every tub must rest on its own bottom."

The Negro race, hitherto, has been as the vine which must cling to the tree or trail in the dust; but now it must imitate the oak which gains independence of foothold and dignity among its rivals of the forest by sending its roots into the soil and expanding its foliage upon the happy air.

## CHARACTER NECESSARY TO PRESERVE A BACKWARD PEOPLE IN CONTACT WITH CIVILIZATION.

The highest need of the Negro race, and, indeed, of any race, is character. This is the chief aim of education, although it is not avowed in the text books or school programs. It cannot be learned by recitation or rote, but must break gradually, as the dawn; and distil quietly, as the dew. Character does not consist of a single virtue, but is an assemblage of qualities that stamp the individuality and give it uprightness, dignity, and poise. The Negro must rely mainly upon the instrumentality of the schools. An acquaintance with the best men, purest thoughts, and noblest deeds that have influenced the world must necessarily leave a residuum of beneficial effect upon the character. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." The friends of the race are sometimes disappointed by the lack of moral earnestness too often displayed by graduates of schools maintained by their bounty. Here again, it seems, that their philosophy is at fault. Men do not become upright and virtuous because they are bidden to do so in proverb and psalm, any more than they can become wise or wealthy at the behest of the benevolently disposed. Physiologists tell us that the body grows by what it feeds on, and that the old cells and tissues are constantly being replaced by new ones. Character, too, is transformed by the nature of its nurture. How can character be developed, is the great puzzle of the educational world. Luckily for the human race this question is completely answered by the Apostle Paul, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Moral and spiritual qualities are primary and eternal. Herein consists the one point of attachment between man and his maker. The Negro often complains, justly enough, that his acquisitions are ignored, and that he is not rewarded according to merit. But virtue, truth, integrity, and uprightness will be honored, at sight, the world over. And what if men should fail to recognize them? Primary qualities do not depend upon human recognition for their value. The righteous are always recognized on high. "Doubtless Thou, O Lord, art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not." But what need we care for Abraham or for Israel when our qualities are appreciated by the Giver of every good

and perfect gift? A people whose feet are tenoned and mortised in the granite foundation of righteousness, will overcome all the obstacles that beset them, however severe the persecution or ill usage. The voice of Heaven is ever whispering in our ear :

“Mortals, that would follow me,  
Love Virtue; she alone is free :  
She can teach ye how to climb  
Higher than the sphyry chime ;  
Or, if Virtue feeble were,  
Heaven itself would stoop to her.”

It requires sterling qualities of character to build up the life of a new people—something of the tough moral fiber of the early Romans or the moral austerity of the Pilgrim Fathers.

I have said that virtue is the preserving element of society. Every civilization that has been overthrown has declined through a lapse from the path of rectitude. Vice is destructive in its nature. The thief, the robber, the murderer, and, no less, those who indulge in the more refined and recondite forms of wickedness, are destructive of the stability of social order. To a backward people in contact with civilization, virtue is necessary to save them from physical destruction. It is quite the general rule that such races are destroyed by the vices of civilization. The Negro race is not immune against the operation of sociological law. Civilization is a savor of life unto life, and of death unto death. Sometimes a medicine is so drastic in its action that the patient dies before the beneficial reaction sets in. The criminal and moral status of the race is threatening its physical continuance. Due allowance must be given to historic and genetic causes, to present social submergence and exculpatory circumstances; but the plain, unpleasant, threatening fact remains. If the American Negro does not conquer his vices he will be destroyed by them. It is not sufficient to say that ninety-five out of every hundred Negroes are orderly and well-behaved, any more than it would be satisfactory for a fruiterer to assure his customer that ninety five out of every hundred apples in a barrel are sound. The vicious five must be suppressed or restrained. The Negro complains bitterly that the sins of the guilty are visited upon the innocent. Vicarious suffering, alas, is inevitable under our social dispensation. As a family shares in the distinguished deeds of its more fortunate representatives, so it cannot escape the odium which attaches to its vicious members. It is true that there is no caste in crime, which is a failing of weak human nature, and that criminals have no race, but are the common





enemy of mankind, yet they are an especial bane to the people to whom their base blood binds them. The Negro bitterly bewails the misery of his lot and hurls fiery invectives against the cruel Caucasian, not necessarily because he loves righteousness and hates iniquity, but because the burden bears grievously upon him. The lamb denounces the ferocity of the wolf, not so much because of his owe innate goodness of soul or because of the inherent deviltry of his wolfship, but because he is the certain victim whenever there is a test of strength. Denunciation of wrong does not necessarily imply a love of right. The violent denunciations hurled from the Negro press, pulpit, and platform are indeed natural ebullitions of feelings; but their effectiveness will be in exact proportion to the principles of righteousness which they inculcate upon the people whose cause they espouse. Responsibility cannot be shifted to the shoulders of the Aryan, whose cruelty and kindness to the African are strangely blended and balanced. It is not sufficient for the leaders of the Negro race to rely upon denunciation of others, however deserved that denunciation may be, or to tickle the people with flattering phrases or honied words of praise; there is also need of the severe moral castigation of the old Hebrew prophets. They should proclaim with emphasis and power that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

#### CONCLUSION.

We sometimes speculate as to the destiny of the Negro race. Omniscience alone can tell what that destiny is to be—whether it is to be worked out in this land or in some distant continent. This is indeed a matter of little importance. Our concern is with development, not destiny. Civilization is growing to be more and more independent of locality or temporary abode. A people who have mastered primary principles can rejoice in the exultation, "Wherever my life is lived, O to be self-balanced for contingencies."

The great truth which our Savior has taught us concerning the realm of righteousness also applies to the kingdom of this world—"Neither shall they say, lo here! or lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you." The seeds of civilization will take root in any soil; but unless a people possess the inner qualification, it makes no difference where their lot is cast, they can only serve as "dumb driven cattle," and are a blight to any land afflicted with their presence. The Negro must get hold of the primary factors of civilization, then he can face the future, "with a heart for any fate."